

[Play Parties]

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Vermont 1938-9 Play Parties

"Why," said Arthur, "they don't have parties now like they used to in the old days. Th' best party of the whole year was what was called a Donation Party for the minister. The wimmen all cooked up good things to eat, for th' minister, you understand, an' the men all gave wood, pertaters and vegetables. Then the night of the donatin' the whole village got together at the parsonage and had a party. They most always et up all the things an' more too than they brought an' the minister was sometimes poorer when they left than before they came, but the fun we had, why parties nowadays don't compare. We played Drop th' Handkerchief, Needle's Eye, Copenhagen, and Roll th' Tin. They was most of 'em kissin' games. My sakes, th' young folks then didn't think nothin' of kissin' games, in fact they wouldn't think they'd had a good evenin's fun if they wasn't kissed half to death. You never heard tell of Copenhagen? Well, well now that was a game. Want I should tell you about it? - You get a clothesline and tie the ends up so as the thing makes a circle. Then a leetle more'n half the folks playin' takes a' hold o' the rope on the outside an' the rest gits in the middle. Then them that's in the middle slap the hands of them that's on the outside, th' girls slap th' boy's an' the other way to. If they can hit 'em before they can git their hands offen the rope the one that hands git hit ducks under the rope and chases th' hitter across the circle. If the hitter gits across and under the outside they're free, but if they gits caught they gits kissed," and Arthur reminiscently 2 smacked his lips, and swung a quick step across the kitchen floor. "I used to ketch 'em," he chuckled. "Yes, an' kiss 'em too," smiled Sadie, his wife.

"Then there was the Needle's Eye," Arthur went on, enjoying himself hugely. "All around the house they put chairs two together, jest fur enough apart to let a person march between. On every pair of chairs there was a boy and a girl, standin' up on 'em. The rest of

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the party made a line, fust a boy an' then a girl, an' marched around singin' and this is what they sung." Arthur went striding around the kitchen table singing the old song.

"The Needle's Eye. The needle's eye That does supply The thread that runs so truly Has caught many a smiling lad And now it has caught YOU. For you look so neat And you kiss so sweet Has caught many a stilling lass And now it has caught YOU."

Arthur ended with a grand flourish, almost out of breath. "Then," he explained, "when they sang, 'it has caught YOU', down they came and caught the one underneath, like London Bridge, only the one caught kissed a boy and took the girl's chair if it was a girl and the other way to if it was a boy. My stars, the whole house was ringin' with the singin' and roarin' with the laughs when the ones got kissed."

In answer as to why they did not play such games now, Arthur looked astonished, then exclaimed, "But it ain't sanitary to do promiscuous-like kissin' these days. Them games we played 3 when young folks wanted their games strong and rough. They didn't think they'd had a good time less the girls' hair was all down on their shoulders an' the boys' ties askew."

Mr. Carleton thinks this generation is a soft bunch with their parking in automobiles and their tame parties. He says, "Give 'em good hard games and let 'em git rid of their spirits playin' an' there wouldn't be so much of this neckin' an' pettin' that's goin' on nowadays."